

Psalms 42:11 (Samuel J. Rutherford) 161713

Letters of Samuel Rutherford, 2. The Troubled Soul (42:11)

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Psa. 42:11

The Cloudy and Dark Day

Believe under a cloud, and wait for Him when there is no moonlight nor starlight.... Faith's eyes, that can see through a millstone, can see through a gloom of God, and under it read God's thoughts of love and peace. Hold fast Christ in the dark; surely ye shall see the salvation of God.

When Christ hideth Himself, wait on, and make din till He return; it is not time then to be carelessly patient. I love to be grieved when He hideth His smiles. Yet believe His love in a patient on waiting and believing in the dark. Ye must learn to swim and hold up your head above the water, even when the sense of His presence is not with you to hold up your chin.

The Hour of Temptation

I find My Lord going and coming seven times a day. His visits are short; but they are both frequent and sweet.... I hear ill tales, and hard reports of Christ, from the Tempter and my flesh; but love believeth no evil. I may swear that they are liars, and that apprehensions make lies of Christ's honest and unalterable love to me.... Temptations, that I supposed to be stricken and to be laid upon their backs, rise again and revive upon me; yea, I see that while I live, temptations will not die.

I find it to be most true, that the greatest temptation out of hell is to live without temptations.... Faith is the better of the free air, and of the sharp winter storm in its face. Grace withereth without adversity. The devil is but God's master fencer, to teach us to handle our weapons.

Self-Occupation

I am like one traveling in the night, who seeth a spirit, and sweateth for fear, and careth not to tell it to his fellow, for fear of increasing his own fear.

I observe many who think it holiness enough to complain, and set themselves at nothing: as if to say "I am sick" could cure them. They think complaints a good charm for guiltiness.

Let your bleeding soul and your sores be put in the hand of this expert Physician; let young and strong corruption and His free grace be yoked together, and let Christ and your sins deal it betwixt them. I shall be loath to put you off your fears, and your sense of deadness: I wish it were more. There be some wounds of that nature, that their bleeding should not be soon stopped. Ye must take a house beside the Physician. It will be a miracle if ye be the first sick man whom He put away uncured, and worse than He found you.... "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Take ye that. It cannot be presumption to take that as your own, when you find that your wounds stound¹ you. Presumption is ever whole at the heart, and hath but the truant sickness, and groaneth only for the fashion. Faith hath sense of sickness, and looking to Christ therein, is glad to see a known face. Christ is as full a feast as ye can have to hunger.... He is a miracle and a world's wonder, to a seeking and a weeping sinner; but yet such a miracle as shall be seen by them who will come and see. The seeker and sigher is at last a singer and enjoyer.

Ye complain that ye want a mark of the sound work of grace and love in your soul. For answer, consider for your satisfaction (till God send more) 1 John 3:14. And as for your complaint of deadness and doubtings, Christ will, I hope, take your deadness and you together. They are bodies full of holes... and broken bones which need mending, that Christ the Physician taketh up: whole vessels are not for the Mediator Christ's art. Publicans, sinners, harlots, are ready market-wares for Christ. The only thing that will bring sinners within a cast of Christ's drawing arm is that which ye write of some feeling of death and sin.... A soul bleeding to death, till Christ were sent for, and cried for in all haste, to come and stem the blood, and close up the hole in the wound with His own hand and balm, were a very good disease, when many are dying of a whole heart.

All the truly regenerated cannot determinately tell you the measure of their dejections; because Christ beginneth young with many, and stealeth into their heart, ere they wit of themselves, and becometh homely with them, with little din or noise. I grant that many are blinded, in rejoicing in a good, cheap conversion, that never cost them a sick night.... But for that; I would say, if other marks be found that Christ is indeed come in, never make plea with Him because He will not answer, "Lord Jesus, how camest Thou in? whether in at door or window?" Make Him welcome, since He is come. "The wind bloweth where it listeth"; all the world's wit cannot perfectly render a reason why the wind should be a month in the east, six weeks possibly in the west, and the space of only an afternoon in the south or north. Ye will not find out all the nicks and steps of Christ's way with a soul, do what ye can; for sometimes He will come in stepping softly, like one walking beside a sleeping person, and slip to the door, and let none know He is there.

Ye challenge yourself that some truths find more credit with you than others. Ye do well; for God is true in the least, as well as in the greatest, and He must be so to you. Ye must not call Him true in the one page of the leaf, and false in the other, for our Lord in all His writings never contradicted Himself yet. Although the best of the regenerate have slipped here, always labor ye to hold your feet.

Ye complain of Christ's short visits, that He will not bear your company one night; but when ye lie down warm at night, ye rise cold at morning. Answer: I cannot blame you (nor any other that knoweth that sweet Guest), to bemoan His withdrawals, and to be most desirous of His abode and company; for He would captivate and engage the affections of any creature that saw His face. Since He looked on me, and gave me a sight of His fair love, He gained my heart wholly, and got away with it.... He shall keep it long, ere I fetch it from Him. But I shall tell you what ye should do; treat Him well, give Him the chair and the board-head, and make Him welcome to the mean portion ye have. A good supper and kind entertainment maketh guests love the inn the better. Yet sometimes Christ hath an errand elsewhere, for mere trial; and then, though ye give Him King's cheer, He will away; as is clear in desertions for mere trial and not for sin.

I would have written ere now, but people's believing there is in me that which I know there is not, hath put me out of love with writing to any. For it is easy to put religion to a market and public fair; but, alas! it is not so soon made eye-sweet for Christ. My Lord seeth me a tired man, far behind. I have gotten much love from Christ, but I give Him little or none again. My white side cometh out on paper to men; but at home and within I find much black work, and great cause of a low sail, and of little boasting.

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